

VZCZCXRO1632  
RR RUEHDE RUEHIHL RUEHKUK  
DE RUEHBC #0048/01 1511845  
ZNY SSSSS ZZH  
R 311845Z MAY 07  
FM REO BASRAH  
TO RUEHGB/AMEMBASSY BAGHDAD 0132  
RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 0548  
INFO RUCNRAQ/IRAQ COLLECTIVE  
RUEHBC/REO BASRAH 0575

S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 BASRAH 000048

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 5/31/2017  
TAGS: PGOV IZ IR  
SUBJECT: JOURNALIST DESCRIBES MAYHEM IN BASRAH

REF: Basrah 47

BASRAH 00000048 001.2 OF 002

CLASSIFIED BY: Louis L. Bono, Director, Basrah Regional Embassy Office, Department of State.  
REASON: 1.4 (d)

(S) Following the killing of Basrah Ja'ish al-Mahdi leader Wissam al-Wa'eli (aka Abu Qadir) on May 25 (see reftel), Basrah Regional Embassy Office IPAO contacted a local journalist who works as an anonymous stringer for a western news organizations (protect source) to inquire about the situation in Basrah. His reply is below.

Begin text:

Dear Sir,

Actually, I sometimes do not understand what is going on in my city, because of the ambiguity and selfish policies of the political parties fighting for control. Their aim is to control this rich city.

For many months, the Fadhila party, which includes Basrah Governor Mohammed al-Wa'eli and 12 of the 42 members of the Basrah Provincial Council, has been struggling to become the dominant power in the city. If they lose Basrah, they will lose Iraq. Al-Wa'eli and the Fadhila Party have been resisting pressure to give up the governorship. The Fadhila spiritual leader, Sheikh Yacubi, has focused his attention on Basrah.

Since the Iranian-backed clerics dislike Yacubi, Fadhila is automatically against Iran's ambitions. Fadhila's policy opposing Iran has created enemies. I cannot say that the Fadhila politicians are all faithful and honest servants of Iraq. But they are 50 percent loyal to Iraq and 50 percent committed to Fadhila's interests. The enemies of the governor and the Fadhila party dislike looking at the progress of Fadhila party through the governor. They fear Fadhila's horizontal and vertical expansion in the Arab homeland. They voice slogans against the governor, but their deep meaning is to limit Fadhila's expansion. The enemies's justification (for their anti-Fadhila campaign) is corruption and shortage of public services in the city. They are trying to persuade the masses of people in Basrah.

The Fadhila enemies:

-----  
¶1. Half the members of the Basrah Provincial Council  
¶2. Sayid Yusuf, the head of the Thar Allah militia, an old enemy of the governor.  
¶3. The Sayid Ashuhada organization which belongs to Abdul Aziz al-Hakim. Sayid Dagher runs this organization in Basrah.  
¶4. The Badr organization, headed by former Basrah Governor

Hassan al-Rashid.

¶5. Hezbollah.

And as always the Office of the Martyr Sadr in Basrah is in the middle of this disorder as well as some ugly persons who join these allies.

Maybe there is a political struggle in Baghdad, but in Basrah the struggle is for economic benefits and individual interests. Iran wants to make Basrah a hot area for well known reasons. It pays money to some forces to play vital roles against the Fadhila Party.

Kuwait and Gulf states pay money to the other side to balance the powers. Fadhila receives money from Gulf states. "We would not cooperate with others, only with you," a Kuwaiti VIP said to the governor. Another Kuwaiti person said the same thing to Thar Allah's Sayid Yusuf and offered him money.

In the middle of this conflict are the victims, the people of Basrah. These people blame the Americans and the British for their suffering because they do not understand that they have been misled by dishonest politicians.

Iraqi Forces

-----  
I feel embarrassed when I talk about Iraqi forces -- General Ali Hammadi, who is head of the Emergency Security Committee, and his brother, Mohammed Hammadi, who is Basrah chief of police. I will give you this example. The Mahdi Army visited General Ali Hammadi and asked him to pay \$20,000 because they need money to buy weapons!!!!. Imagine that this man runs security movements in this big city. Or his brother, the chief of police. He is scared of his shadow. All military forces ran away when there were clashes in this city. The events of the recent days prove what I say. Seventy percent of Iraqi police are involved with political parties, and the chief of police is aware of this fact. If anyone asks them about security, they always answer, "we control the city."

BASRAH 00000048 002.2 OF 002

After the killing of Wissam al-Wa'eli (aka Abu Qadir), the Basrah commander of the Mahdi Army, his loyalists spread through the city with their weapons and:

- ¶1. No Iraqi Army troops were in the streets.
- ¶2. Police cars helped the Mahdi Army by opening streets for them. Some police cars carried Iraqi flags and Mahdi fighters.
- ¶3. Military and police leaders ran away from their homes.
- ¶4. Seven RPGs were fired at the house of the Iraqi Army commander, who then sent a delegation to the Mahdi Army and swore that he was not behind the killing of Abu Qadir. Imagine, sir! (See reftel.)

I visited the Basrah government building and the Provincial Council last week:

- ¶1. No governor for one month.
- ¶2. Three members of the Provincial Council.

So who runs this city? For this reason, I said at the beginning that I do not understand anything sometimes.

Dear sir, if you have the authority to change something in my city for the sake of my people, tell me please and I am ready to help.

Keep your promise not to reveal my name.  
End text.

Comment: While the letter may sound in-part pro-Fadhila, his assertions are consistent with what we hear from other sources.

End comment.

BONO